

Bulletin of the Kenton County Historical Society

May/June

2006

New Bulletin Design Debuts With Next Issue

Be on the lookout for the next issue of the Bulletin of the Kenton County Historical Society. Due to some of the results of the survey we gave our members last year, we have made several changes in the design, color and size of this popular bi-monthly newsletter. The new design will allow us to include more stories in each issue, as well as to offer special feature columns. Each issue will also feature the old favorites such as the "Then and Now" and "Mystery Photo" sections. We're sure you will like the new Bulletin and we continue to welcome your comments and suggestions.

Calendar of Events

"Trinity Church Garden Mart"

May 5th and May 6th (Fri: 10-5 Sat: 9-Noon)

Madison Avenue, just north of Fifth Street — Covington

This yearly event will feature booths from which various flowers, plants, crafts, and other items will be on sale. Sponsored by the Episcopal Church Women, an entire truck load of items to help beautify your landscape and home will be available for purchase.

"Roebeling Fest"

Sunday June 4, 2006 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM

Below Suspension Bridge — Covington Riverfront

Festivities include live entertainment from a barbershop quartet, jazz brass band, vintage dance group, and a civil war-costumed ensemble. Guided tours will be available of the Roebeling Suspension Bridge and the new Legacy Riverfront Murals. Various food, historical information and craft booths will be set-up. Children will

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The Kenton County Historical Society

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Historic Photos of Covington Needed

The committee working on the bicentennial history of Covington book is in search of old photos to include in the huge publication.

We need photos of old buildings and important people of the past, but we are just as interested in pictures of the various "burgs" of Covington and other important neighborhoods such as Latonia, Ft. Wright, Parks Hills, Ludlow, etc.

If you think you might have something we would be interested in, please email the committee at: covingtonhistorybook@fuse.net or phone Bob Webster at: 859-356-5088

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Three Early Pioneers of Kentucky

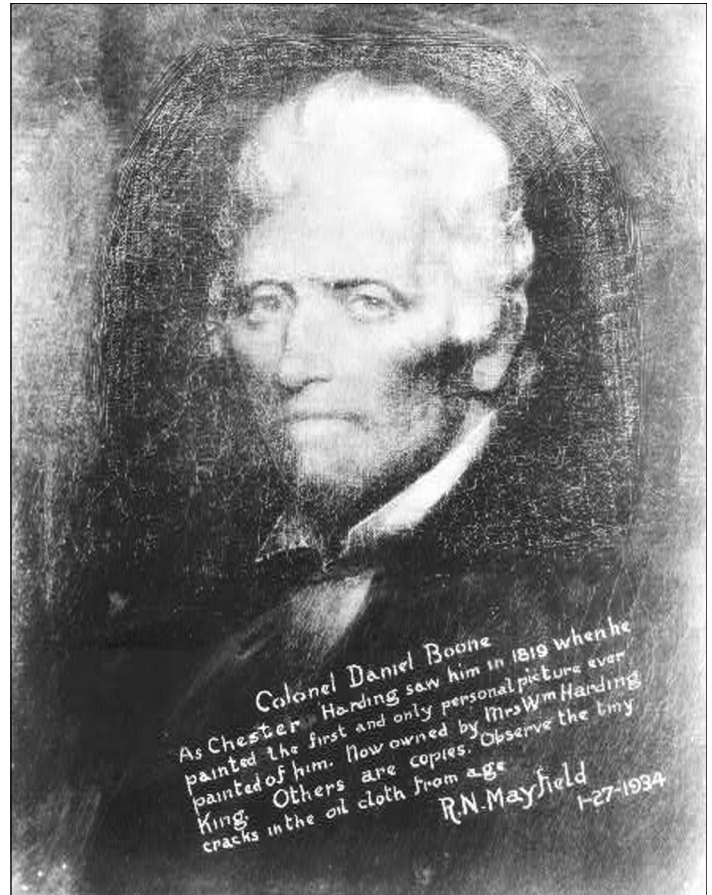
Boone Kenton Clark

In a study of early Kentucky history, there seems to have been three types of pioneers. First there was the explorer, interested primarily in the countryside from a geographical or geological point of view. Second was the hunter and fur-trader who sought a living using his gun and trap. Third was the settler, the man who was to bring his family, carve a home in the rugged wilderness and join others in building a livable state for all future generations. All these men had to be fighters. All of them needed courage, strength and independence. Once in a while, there would be found among them, a leader who combined the skill of the explorer, a knowledge of the woods inherent to the hunter, the vision of the home builder, and the bravery and resourcefulness of the born soldier. Of our Kentucky pioneers, there were three who, without question, could be placed in this class. They were George Rogers Clark, Daniel Boone and Simon Kenton. While there were many early pioneers whose deeds reflect the chronicles of the West, it is probable that Clark, Boone and Kenton will forever remain the ideal heroes of their era.

Daniel Boone

Daniel Boone is without a doubt the best known pioneer. Born in 1735, he was one of eleven children of English immigrants in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Thanks to television, a whole generation has grown up thinking of Boone as a tall, clean-cut, broad-shouldered family man, ready to fight an Indian or a bear at the drop of his coonskin cap. The real Boone was only 5'10" tall, his long hair dangled in a ponytail and he wore a black felt hat. Boone was a robust man, but he was just as likely to talk his way out of a tight spot as to fight. As for his family life, Boone was not the type to be held to the walls of a traditional home. He was away from home more than he was home, exploring the next ridge and the valley beyond, often leaving his family for months at a time.

Boone first explored what became Kentucky in 1769, returning with his family and friends four years later only to be driven out by Indians. His oldest son, James, was among those killed in that Indian raid. Boone returned to Kentucky in 1775 and built the fortification that became Boonesborough. He explored much of what is now Northern Kentucky and quickly became a legend.



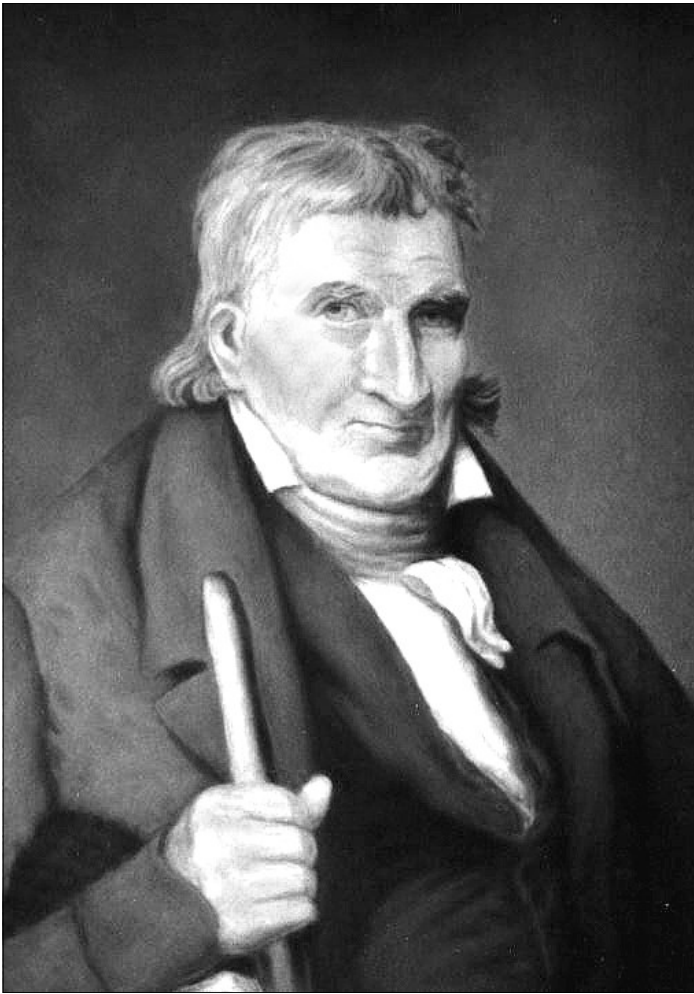
Daniel Boone, as seen in his most famous portrait.

In 1778, he was captured by Indians near Blue Licks and taken to Ohio. He escaped, but faced a court-martial from the militia during the Revolutionary War on charges of cooperating with the British. After being cleared of all charges, he was made a colonel in the militia.

Boone lost most of his claims to Kentucky land because proper papers were not filed. He eventually moved to Missouri to escape his problems in Kentucky. He died there in 1820. It took 25 years to convince Missouri officials to return Boone's body for burial in Kentucky.

Simon Kenton

Simon Kenton was a little over 6 feet tall and weighed 190 pounds. He had auburn hair, gray eyes and a soft, tremulous voice. Kenton grew up on his father's



Simon Kenton

small, rented estate, with several other children, until he passed his sixteenth birthday. He fell in love, but a rival lad won the girl's affections. Kenton tried to stop the marriage but was beaten up by the groom's relatives. He returned later and beat the groom, William Leachman, so severely he thought he had killed the man. Kenton fled the area and joined a band of hunters already moving to the West. He changed his name to Simon Butler, was thrown on his own resources and out of necessity, began to develop the independence, courage and shrewdness in forest lore, which were to distinguish him thereafter.

By great luck, Simon made the acquaintance of John Yeager, who had resided with the Indians for many years and was familiar with their habits of living. Soon, Yeager and Kenton, with another companion, George Strader, made arrangements to go westward. It was on this trip in 1771 that Kenton, still going by the name Butler, had his first glimpse of Kentucky's beauty. The trio visited many places along the shores of the Ohio, finally returning to the Great Kanawha, where they spent two winters before the Indians found them, plundered their

camp and killed Yeager. In the following spring, 1773, three exploring parties were going into Kentucky's wilderness from Ohio. Of these, Simon joined the first, headed by Dr. John Wood and Hancock Lee. They were to meet with the second group, led by Captain Thomas Bullitt, at the mouth of the Scioto River. However, being informed by the third group, led by the McAfees, that Bullitt would join them at the Little Miami, Simon's party hurried to that point, only to find it deserted. Erroneously supposing that Indians had killed Bullitt and his men, Simon's group started back up river, but were themselves attacked by a large group of Indians near Three Islands. At that point, they abandoned their canoes and set out over land in the general direction of old Virginia, a trip never undertaken from that point before. Simon, then eighteen years old, piloted the small party through the rugged wilderness. This one incident may explain the subsequent career of Kenton. The reputation which he acquired by guiding Lee and Wood back to Virginia established his fame along the entire frontier. Still thinking he could not return home with safety, he decided to remain in the west, but inside the fortified settlements.

Kenton later built a trading station in Mason County and took part in many explorations and attacks on Indian villages. His encounters with Indians became legendary. In one instance, Kenton was surprised by Indians while sleeping. He escaped with nothing but a shirt, evading the Indians for six days before finally reaching safety. On another occasion, Kenton was captured by Indians and tied to a stake to be burned. He was saved by a Canadian trapper, who bought him and turned him over to British authorities at Detroit.

Like Boone, Kenton became involved in land disputes and moved to Urbana, Ohio. He died there in 1836. Unlike Boone, Kenton's fame never reached the scope of television. In fact, little recognition has been bestowed him within Kentucky's borders. In Covington, a small stone erroneously commemorates the life of Simon Kenton. It reads:

*Erected to the Memory of Simon Kenton
May 15, 1755 — April, 1836
Pioneer and Patriot*

By the Elizabeth Kenton Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution
(Kenton was born April 3, 1755 and died April 29, 1836.)

George Rogers Clark

In 1772, George Rogers Clark purchased surveyor's instruments and a copy of Euclid's Elements, left his home in Virginia and initiated his practice as a sur-

veyor for the Ohio Company. Clark's journey took him along the Ohio River, Kanawha River and Fish Creek (Pennsylvania). From 1772 to 1776, he was a guide for settlers and located land claims for himself, his family and other friends by establishing such communities as Leesburg, now a part of Frankfort, Kentucky.

Clark gained recognition in western settlements as an excellent Indian fighter. His military prowess earned him rank as a militia captain during Lord Dunmore's War, in which rich, white land speculators sponsored militiamen to fight Northern Indian tribes for control of the Ohio River Valley. After the war, Clark returned to Kentucky and became instrumental in protecting Kentucky from future Indian conflict.

Increased harassment from Indians and indifference towards Kentucky by the Virginia legislature led Clark to call a meeting of representatives from all Kentucky-based forts at Harrodsburg. At the time, the nation was preparing for war with Britain and Kentucky was left virtually defenseless against not only Indians, but also British marauders. Clark and the other settlers concluded that either they pledge alliance with the British, or seek inclusion of Kentucky as a separate county of Virginia. On December 31, 1776, Kentucky County of Virginia was created and Clark, just 24 years old, was given command of the Kentucky militia.

Over his ten years of military service, Clark personally funded his campaigns by mortgaging and/or selling land claims he amassed during his career as a surveyor, as well as serving in the Virginia military without pay. At the end of the war, the Virginia legislature allotted Clark 18,000 acres of land and over 2,000 pounds of sterling as back pay. They refused to pay for any other military expenses, including Clark's debts of over \$20,000 to the Illinois battalion he had organized to support Virginia's war effort. Clark was left in financial ruin.

Clark was offered a military commission from France to attack Spanish-held New Orleans. He readily accepted the title of major general in the armies of France and commander-in-chief of the French Revolutionary Legions on the Mississippi River. In June 1798, Clark was informed by the United States government that he must resign the position or be arrested.

Years of alcoholism and deteriorating health impacted Clark's military career. He retired from military service and devoted his life as a consultant, helping establish civic organizations and governments, as well as promoting commercial trade in the Clarksville-Louisville

F.Y.I.

If you surf the World Wide Web and are at all interested in Northern Kentucky history, here are a few really nice websites to visit.

The Kentucky Historical Society has a Digital Collections page. It can be found at:
<http://162.114.3.83:2005/>

The Kentucky Virtual Library website can be found at: <http://www.kyvl.org/>

Northern Kentucky Views is a wonderful site filled with images from all over the Northern Kentucky area. The site can be found at:
www.nkyviews.com

Another great site for local history is the Cincinnati Memory Project, whose site is located at:
<http://www.cincinnati-memory.org/>

If you know of any other sites you would like to share with our membership, please send us an email! Hope you enjoy the ones listed here.

area. By 1805, Clark's mobility was limited to the confines of his home and was described by friends as "frail and helpless." A stroke in 1809 caused him to fall into his fireplace, where one leg was burned so badly it required amputation. A second stroke, in 1813, left him paralyzed. On February 13, 1818, Clark died after a third stroke. Clark's remains were initially buried in a family plot at Locust Grove near Louisville, but were exhumed in 1869 and placed in a more appropriate plot in Louisville's Cave Hill Cemetery.

Sources:

Collected Papers of the Christopher Gist Historical Society, Volume I, Christopher Gist Historical Society, 1949.

Pieces of the Past, Volume I, Jim Reis, The Kentucky Post, 1988.

George Rogers Clark, Kentucky Frontiersman, Hero, and Founder of Louisville, via www.kdla.ky.gov/resources/KYGRClark.htm

Bridge Disaster of 1892

An excerpt from "Pieces of the Past" by Jim Reis

On June 15, 1892, about 60 men were hard at work building a new bridge to span the Licking River between Covington's 12th Street and Newport's 11th Street. What started as a trembling sensation ended with the collapse of the large structure. One of the workers was William Wilson, who told the *Kentucky Post* what happened:

"I was standing on the false works, near the traveler on the Newport side, talking with Andy Baird, one of the contractors who had just arrived. We were just chatting when suddenly, we felt the entire structure sinking beneath us and with common impulse, started to run for the Newport end. We had scarcely gone more than 10 feet when the whole thing went down and we were thrown headlong through the air. I lost consciousness and did not recover my senses until I rose to the surface of the water. The first thing I saw was the form of Baird, fearfully mangled, wedged in between the timbers. He groaned several times then died. I managed to seize a piece of drifting timber and hold to it until a small boat came to my rescue. I cannot tell the cause of the accident."

The "false works" mentioned were the temporary wooden piers used to hold up the bridge while it was under construction. The "traveler" was a large wooden structure with pulleys that towered over the false works.

Witnesses to the accident told the *Kentucky Journal* that the horror was magnified by the "shrieks, screams and wailing of the women and children, and even the men, more accustomed to scenes where death came by violence, were appalled."

The article reported that emergency crews from Covington, Newport and Cincinnati responded quickly, but bodies were everywhere. The banks of

the Licking River were red from the blood of those dragged there. Within two hours, more than 20 bodies had been recovered. Divers said other victims were still pinned beneath the wreckage on the river bottom. Hospitals and undertakers called in extra help to handle the disaster. Telegraph operators were kept busy as out-of-town families tried to find out whether their loved ones were among the dead or injured. Most of the bridge workers were from Greater Cincinnati, but others had come from as far away as New Hampshire, New Jersey and Maryland.

When daylight broke the next morning, several thousand spectators had already gathered to watch the recovery efforts. Volunteers were slowly sifting through the rubble when a second section of the bridge collapsed. Though several men were working under the 2,000-pound section at the time, a warning shout saved their lives. Several other bodies had been recovered and the death toll stood at 21, with 14 injured and three missing. In the following weeks, many of the injured had died, including Wilson. The final report listed the dead at 31.

A report on the cause stated that the piles had been improperly installed, that the traveler was too heavy for the structure, and that few safety measures were in place because workers were attempting to break a bridge-building record. Work began on a replacement bridge nearly immediately and in 1893, this new span was completed. The bridge, informally but officially known as the 11th Street Bridge, remained in operation until 1914 when questions about its structural safety forced its closing. Plans were made for still another span and on April 7, 1915, the Shortway Bridge opened. This wooden span, which included a toll booth for much of its life, fell to the wrecking ball in the 1990s. Today, the fourth bridge at the same location allows traffic and pedestrians to cross the Licking once again. This wide, concrete construction, is named the Licking Valley Girl Scout Bridge.

Survey Results

Findings of the Survey Given Our Membership Last Year

As you may be aware, included in one of our Bulletins late last year was a special survey to our membership. We again express our thanks to the hundreds of you who took the time to complete the small questionnaire. Here are some of the findings and changes underway based on the results of that survey.

Less Meetings — More Publications

One of the most important findings was the fact that you like to read about Northern Kentucky history rather than attend monthly lectures. Many of you expressed that attending monthly meetings can be difficult with time scheduling and transportation. You told us that you would rather read about local history in the comfort of your own home or office. As a result, we are:

- scheduling only a few special lectures, meetings and tours a year rather than one every month. If you can only get away three or four times a year, these will be the dates to do so. As always, we will give as much advance notice as possible. Some future plans in the discussion stages include a trip to Augusta and a historic, narrated cruise up the Licking River.
- expanding the size of our bi-monthly Bulletin to accommodate additional articles and feature columns. Old favorites such as the “Then and Now” and “Mystery Photos” sections remain. The color will change as well, making the text easier to read and the photographs more clear.
- devoting special attention to the development of a Publications Committee. Already, we have published one fantastic book, *Northern Kentucky Fires, A Summary of the Most Memorable Fires of the Region*. The book, written by Robert Webster, details more than 130 fires and includes more than 110 photographs! The biggest project we have in the works is the bicentennial history of Covington. Two other publications are in the planning stages. One is Paul Tenkotte’s great

Dissertation comparing the cities of Covington, Newport and Cincinnati. It will be a wonderful addition to area libraries and will also be available for purchase. We are also working on editing and publishing the Christopher Gist Society Papers. As many of you know, the Christopher Gist Historical Society, formed in 1949, kept a written record of the many lectures presented to the group, covering various topics of this region’s early history. Few complete sets of these works still exist and those that do have become so brittle that research from them is nearly impossible. Once reprinted, these volumes too, will be a wonderful addition to the shelves at all local libraries. We will also make copies of this work available for purchase.

Email Reminders of Upcoming Events

Many of you expressed an interest in having us remind you of upcoming events, tours and lectures via email. We are beginning to compile a database of those emails in order to accommodate this request. If interested, please email the Society and provide us your email address. Future membership renewal forms will also provide a space to provide this information.

Thanks Again

Thanks again for providing us with this valuable information. If you have any other suggestions, comments or ideas for future lectures, tours or excursions, please let us know.

Also, if you haven’t ordered your copy of *Northern Kentucky Fires*, you still have time to do so. Just send a check for \$20.00 for each copy requested to the Society at the address on the front of this bulletin. Please write “fire book” somewhere in the correspondence.

Then and Now



Left: the former Covington YMCA, located on the southeast corner of Pike and Madison, Covington. The main entrance was through the doors under the canopy, while the Pike Street entrance offered a more direct route to the lower-level pool and lockers. A full gym was provided on the second floor and a suspended running track hung above. Today, the building houses offices of the Cabinet for Family and Children's Services.

Mystery Photo

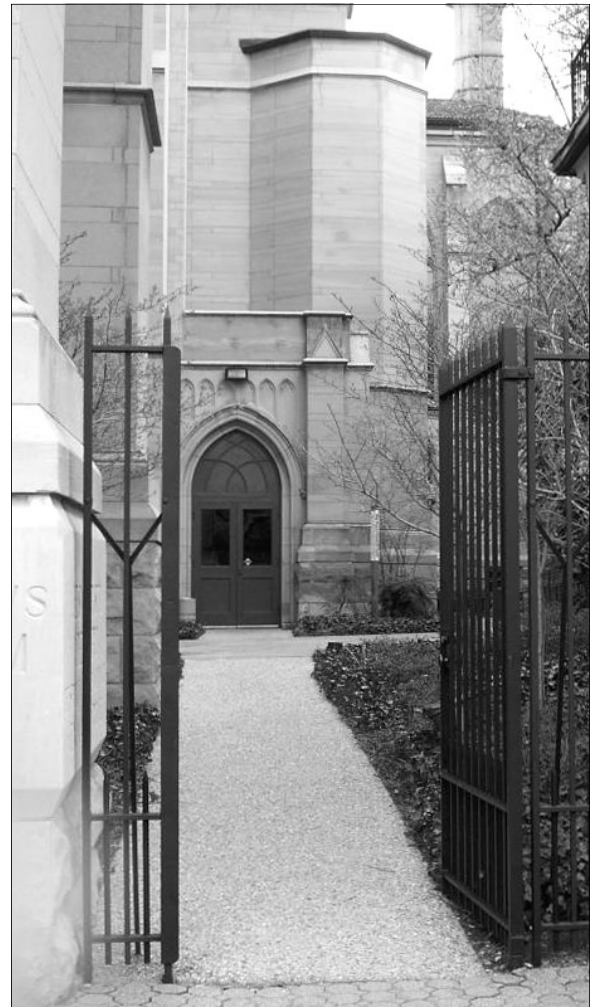
"Grand Entrances to History" is this year's Mystery Photo topic. Do you know the location of this issue's photos? The answer is shown below



ANSWER:

Entrance to the Museum at the
Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption,
12th and Madison, Covington.

Photos courtesy: Ronnin Einhaus



Kenton County Historical Society
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Dedicated to preserving our heritage as the "Gateway to the South"

KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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INSIDE:

Three Early Pioneers of Kentucky

Boone — Kenton — Clark

Bridge Disaster of 1892 — Reliving the Headlines

Survey Results